

2009-2013
Strategic Plan
Idaho Museum of Natural History

Approved:

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Seven Strategic Directives were identified that encompass the plan for the Idaho Museum of Natural History over the next three years. These are areas of focus and goals that lead to the delivery of core services and achievement of the vision. They are:

- Fulfill and enhance core services
- Increase revenue
- Strengthen the Museum's professional standing
- Strengthen relationships with key constituents
- Ensure acquisition, retention, and professional development of necessary staff / human resources
- Create and implement a shared Museum vision
- Identify, develop and implement effective, efficient technology systems to support all Museum functions

The goals identified within these areas of focus encompass all Museum activities for the next three years. In a few cases it was recognized that a goal was larger than three years could accommodate, and five years was set as the time frame. Each Goal has supporting objectives with related measures and benchmarks.

Brief History of the Idaho Museum of Natural History

The Idaho Museum of Natural History was founded in 1934 in Pocatello as the Historical Museum at the Southern Branch of the University of Idaho, as Idaho State University was then called. The Museum was established by a group of professors in an effort to collect, preserve, and display the region's natural and cultural heritage

The earliest collections, consisting of about 5,000 objects, were primarily anthropological, archaeological and historical artifacts largely donated by the Pocatello Chamber of Commerce and faculty and supporters of the Southern Branch. The biological collections were developed by faculty in the Biological Sciences Department at approximately the same time. The Museum was governed by a 17-member Historical Museum Committee until the mid-1950's when it was renamed the Idaho State College Museum and its first full-time director was appointed. In 1963, Idaho State College became Idaho State University, and the Museum changed its name to the Idaho State University Museum.

For many years, the Museum's holdings were strewn about the ISU campus in a variety of buildings. In 1976, Museum offices, exhibits and collections finally found a permanent home in the old library building, now known as the Museum Building. In 1977, the museum reoriented its mission to focus on natural history and the Ray J. Davis Herbarium and zoological collections were formally transferred from the ISU Department of Biological Sciences. Its historical collections were deaccessioned to the Idaho State Historical Society, the Bannock County Historical Society, and the Idaho State University Library.

Also at this time, Museum and university officials worked at the state level to gain recognition for the Museum. In May 1977, the Idaho State Board of Education adopted a resolution requesting that Governor John Evans designate the Idaho State University Museum as the Idaho Museum of Natural History (IMNH); he signed this proclamation on July 1, 1977. In 1986, the Idaho State Legislature confirmed the governor's proclamation by enacting legislation that formally designated the Museum as the official state museum of natural history (Idaho Statute 33-3012)

IMNH now exists as a Special Program of Public Service (with separate line-item funding) of the Idaho State Board of Education, with Idaho State University providing additional support, advocacy and supervision. Currently the Museum holds and cares for over 500,000 natural and cultural objects in its collections areas located in the Museum building's basement and fourth floor. The basement also houses the exhibition fabrication shop and artifact and fossil preparation laboratories. The main floor contains administrative offices, the Education Resource Center, education classroom, and Children's Discovery Room, the Stirton-Kelson Library, exhibition galleries, exhibition graphics studio, and Museum Store. Research areas, including the Idaho Virtualization Laboratory, space for student and visiting researchers, and curator offices are found in the basement and on the fourth floor

In 2009, the Idaho Museum of Natural History will celebrate its 75th birthday

Guiding Principles

Core Functions mandated by Idaho Statute 33-3012

- To collect, care for, research, interpret and present, through educational programs and exhibitions, Idaho's cultural and natural heritage
- To support and encourage local and municipal natural history museums throughout the state of Idaho

Mission Statement

The Idaho Museum of Natural History actively nurtures an understanding of and delight in Idaho's natural and cultural heritage. As the official state museum of natural history, it acquires, preserves, studies, interprets and displays natural and cultural objects for Idaho residents, visitors and the world's community of students and scholars. The Museum also supports and encourages Idaho's other natural history museums through mentoring and training in sound museological practices.

Core Values

Stewardship: We care for collections with dedication and accountability

Community: We engage a diverse community by understanding their interests and empowering their personal relationship with natural and cultural heritage

Excellence: We educate and inspire with professional integrity, scholarship, research and innovation

Respect: We listen, consider, and respond fairly to all voices

Vitality: We flourish by cultivating multiple, diverse avenues of support

Vision of Success

- IMNH is well recognized by its constituents and colleagues for outstanding research, collections, and interpretation of Idaho's natural and cultural treasures. We consistently draw diverse and increasing patronage from scholars, educational institutions, and the public-at-large
- We pursue programs in collections enhancement and research to support our mission
- Our interpretive programs are based on audience input, academic research and professional standards, and are scholarly, meaningful, accessible and engaging
- Idaho natural history museums benefit from IMNH resources and services
- Research, collections, and interpretation have an ample and appropriate facility in accordance with all accepted standards of curation, care and delivery
- Diverse funding sources amply support all aspects of operation and staff positions for IMNH mission areas and the retention of outstanding employees
- Partners – educators, businesses, state and federal agencies, and other community service organizations and individuals – are actively engaged in fulfilling the IMNH mission through contributions of funding, time, expertise and advocacy
- Appropriate technologies support all IMNH mission areas efficiently and effectively

Motto

“Nurturing an understanding of and delight in Idaho's natural and cultural heritage”

Strategic Directives and Goals Objective Plans

Strategic Directive I: Fulfill and enhance core services

Goal 1: Deliver core services

Objectives:

- Collect, care for, research, and interpret Idaho's natural and cultural treasures
- Support and encourage Idaho's natural history museums

Measures:

- Identify natural and cultural treasures that require attention and need to be collected and preserved
- Complete cataloging and data entry for objects in collections
- Reduce number of objects requiring conservation
- Properly accession and store new collections
- Properly process all loan and access requests
- All research initiatives continue to produce results as specified in research plans
- Create educational programs and exhibits to produce results as specified in interpretative and exhibit plans
- Serve on boards and present at conferences of Idaho Association of Museums and Western Museum Association conferences and provide mentoring and traveling exhibits as requested

Benchmarks:

- Meet or exceed the American Association of Museum's Accreditation Program Standards and attain reaccreditation

Goal 2: *Strengthen collections and enhance their status*

Objectives:

- Evaluate local, national, and international significance of all collections
- Evaluate collections for weaknesses, explore how to correct
- Explore our user audiences and examine venues for promoting our collections to new users
- Explore costs for undertakings identified
- Implement plans as indicated

Measures:

- Report written on significance of collections
- Report written on weaknesses and recommendations for correction
- Explore options for promoting collections such as presenting at conferences, hosting conferences, increasing publications, and attending professional meetings
- Identify funds needed to address promoting collections to new users and correcting weaknesses in collections
- Collections strengthened and status improved

Benchmark:

- Increase in the total number of users and venues identified equal to or exceeding the preceding year

Goal 3: *Increase space for all Museum functions*

Objectives:

- Assess and prioritize available space and needs
- Develop and implement plan to optimize available space
- Conduct campaign to raise awareness of supplemental space needs
- Explore ideal IMNH facility

Measures

- Comprehensive lists of available space / needs developed
- Detailed lists of needs outlining size and usage developed
- Report written outlining plan to optimize available space for high priority needs developed
- Implement plan to optimize usage of available space implemented
- Invite ISU / SBOE to tour museum and to recognize and support IMNH space needs
- Get ISU / SBOE engaged in seeking solutions for space needs
- White paper addressing ideal IMNH facility produced

Benchmarks

- Increase in the amount of space utilized by all museum staff, collections, and functions

Goal 4: Increase Museum research opportunities

Objectives:

- Develop materials that describe IMNH strengths and research opportunities
- Meet with appropriate entities (e.g. ISU departments, state agencies, etc.) to disseminate information and investigate partnerships
- Hold retreat-like forum to discuss IMNH strengths and opportunities
- Hold second forum to present and vet the ideas
- Explore refined list
- At least one idea is being pursued

Measure:

- Prepare presentation package
- Present all ISU departments with strengths and depth of IMNH for research opportunities
- White paper assembled with list of potential areas to explore and a plan for whom, when, and how
- Refined list of ideas assigned for further fleshing out (resources needed, start-up and sustainability costs, funding opportunities)
- White paper prepared describing each idea

Benchmark:

- Increase IMNH funding through grants, contracts, and external funding from previous year

Goal 5: Strengthen Museum exhibits and educational programs to better represent mission, research, and collections for a wider audience

Objectives:

- Develop and implement interpretive plan reflecting our mission, research, and collections and which rigorously incorporates audiences' needs and curriculum standards

Measure:

- Creation of interpretive plan to assist with development of exhibits and educational programs in accordance with the IMNH Strategic Plan

Benchmark:

- Increase in the number of exhibits, temporary exhibits, and educational programs produced and assessed

Goal 6: Attain economic self-sufficiency for the Museum Store

Objectives:

- Create business plan for Museum Store
- Create a viable Museum E-store
- Increase sales for on-site Museum Store
- Make store manager position full-time and permanent

Measure:

- Business plan is created and implemented
- Museum E-store is created and implemented
- Store manager position becomes full-time and permanent

Benchmark:

- Amount of increase in store sales at least 10% over previous year bringing the store toward economic self-sufficiency

Goal 7: *Expand IMNH Membership Program*

Objectives:

- Increase IMNH Membership by conducting a yearly membership drive
- Initiate Kid's Membership Program
- Encourage broader community support
- Increase member participation in Museum events
- Integrate and coordinate membership events with Museum divisions and activities
- Develop and implement membership events schedule
- Follow through with membership benefit events and recognition at each level

Measures:

- Assess effectiveness of annual membership drives
- Assess interest in kids membership program, and, if sufficient interest establish strategies and protocols
- IMNH and the Friends of the Museum will co-sponsor at least one successful activity to encourage broader community support of the Membership Program
- Monthly meetings for staff to integrate and coordinate membership events
- Explore donor recognition

Benchmarks:

- White paper produced outlining history, current relationship and potential role of the Friends of IMNH
- Member survey developed and data collected; results assessed and protocols developed
- Several meetings have been held with the Friends' to explore potential partnerships that encourage broader community support of the Membership Program
- Continually assess protocols, membership benefits, members events and recognition strategies, and increase member participation by 10% over preceding year

Goal 8: *Explore and pursue opportunities to publish Museum-related topics*

Objectives:

- Assess audiences for Museum-related publications
- Based on audience assessment, develop a business plan for Museum-related publications, if indicated
- Pursue opportunities to publish Museum-related topics, if indicated
- Business plan for publishing Museum-related topics implemented

Measures:

- Profile of IMNH publications audiences obtained
- Create a business plan for producing and marketing publications
- Develop Museum-related publications
- Pursue publication opportunities

Benchmarks:

- Number of publications successfully planned, completed, and offered to constituent groups

Strategic Directive II: Increase revenue

Goal 1: Pursue funding from repositing agencies in support of collections

Objectives:

- Examine existing agreements and other repository structures
- Track IMNH resources currently expended for repository activities
- Review national repository storage and processing fees
- Solicit MOUs from repositing agencies
- Prepare and send letter to repositing agencies including status report for their collections; solicit their comments
- Explore marketing our repository services to a regional audience
- Actively track and support appropriate legislation that funds repositing agencies' collection activities
- Follow up as indicated

Measures:

- Letters and reports sent; feedback received
- Feasibility report produced

Benchmarks:

- Report of findings produced
- MOUs with 100% of agencies repositing collections at IMNH
- Funding for repository collections increased by 10% over the previous year

Goal 2: Foster an environment to enable exploring and pursuing more grant opportunities

Objectives:

- Brainstorm with staff about potential projects suited to grants
- Prioritize projects based on available staff and resources
- Identify available granting resources, especially funding sources for previous IMNH projects, and identify matching requirements

- Based on priority ranking and available matching resources, begin writing grants
- Follow up as indicated

Measures:

- Identify and produce prioritized list of projects to pursue
- Identify available resources and matching requirements
- Submit grant proposals by appropriate deadlines

Benchmarks:

- Increase in the number of grant proposals submitted from previous year
- Increase in the number of grant proposals received from previous year
- Increase in the total dollars received from grant funding

Goal 3: *Increase sponsorships for public programs*

Objectives:

- Determine sponsorship opportunities for programs as they arise
- Develop sponsorship approach for each program
- Create list of appropriate potential sponsors based on approach
- Create sponsorship pitch materials for each program (as needed)
- Secure sponsorships

Measures:

- Identify sponsorship opportunities
- Generate list of potential sponsors for each program
- Solicit support from potential sponsors

Benchmarks:

- Sponsorship money will increase by 10% over previous year

External Factors Influencing this Goal

- Competitive funding environment challenges our ability to present Museum opportunities to potential sponsors

Strategic Directive III: Strengthen the Museum's visibility and professional standing

Goal 1: *Strengthen Museum visibility and name recognition*

Objectives:

- Assess current Museum visibility and name recognition
- Create annual general Museum marketing plan
- Implement strategies from marketing plan
- Develop strategies for differentiating IMNH from other museums
- Track marketing plan success

Measures:

- Update marketing plan
- Implement strategies and protocols
- Track visitation and log visitor comments
- Surveys created and implemented; results tabulated

Benchmarks:

- Attendance at Museum programs will increase over previous year

- Percent of visitation will increase over previous year
- Number of newspaper, television, and other media spots will increase over previous year

Goal 2: *Attain reaccreditation with the American Association of Museums*

Objectives:

- Secure or develop required documents, as necessary
- Complete Self-Study
- Host Visiting Committee for on-site reaccreditation evaluation
- Museum reaccreditation secured

Measures:

- All required documentation identified and developed
- Self-study questionnaire and required documentation completed and submitted on time
- On-site evaluation completed

Benchmarks:

- Fully reaccredited without concerns or conditions

Goal 3: *Complete and implement American Association of Museum's Museum Assessment Program (MAP) III - Public Dimension Assessment (PDA)*

Objectives:

- Implement peer reviewers' Assessment Report

Measures:

- Implementation goals assessed during yearly strategic planning; progress form completed and submitted on time

Benchmarks:

- Meet or exceed the recommendation made by the Assessment Report

Goal 4: *Conduct year-long state-wide 75th Anniversary celebration for Museum in 2009 - 2010*

Objectives:

- Secure the support of key entities (ISU administration/departments, SBOE)
- Convene Celebration Committee
- Develop Celebration timeline and budget
- Plan activities and secure sponsors
- Hold year-long state-wide celebration of Museum's 75th Anniversary

Measures:

- Secure support of key entities
- Identify and select potential committee members and hold regular meetings
- Celebration timeline and budget developed
- Activities planned and sponsors secured

Benchmarks:

- Host a successful year-long state-wide celebration of the Museum's 75th Anniversary beginning December 2009
- Secure long-term support and increased funding for IMNH

Strategic Directive IV: Strengthen relationships with key constituents

Goal 1: *Increase understanding of users of core Museum services, their needs, and their preferred receipt of services*

Objectives:

- Review previous surveys for information about who our audiences are and what we learned from the survey process
- Develop new surveys for visitors and the community-at-large to test their needs and how they would like them delivered
- Hold focus groups to learn how IMNH can better serve its audiences
- Create a statewide Museum Advisory Board
- Track, analyze, and use information gathered to shape core services

Measures:

- Create report of audience findings and target audience
- Create and implement at least one survey
- Create and hold at least one focus group
- Create list of potential board members, create advisory board and begin holding regular meetings
- Summary report with recommendations produced

Benchmarks:

- Using input from surveys and focus groups, the Museum will identify the communities it serves and makes appropriate decisions in how it serves them
- Advisory board is created with representation from around the state

Goal 2: *Strengthen relationship with ISU administration, faculty, students and the community-at-large*

Objectives:

- Assess and strengthen the relationships with ISU administration, faculty, students, and other major entities such as Obler Library and the Center for Ecological Research and Education
- Assess and strengthen relationships with likely community partners

Measures:

- Develop and implement survey to identify key issues and explore solutions
- Hold regular meetings between director and key administrators, deans, directors, department chairs, etc
- Invite at least three key administrators, deans, directors, department chairs, etc. to tour the Museum
- Invite ASISU officers and/or Senate to tour the Museum

- Present a \$.50/per student budget request to ASISU to be allocated to support IMNH and to allow students better access to the Museum and its programs
- Follow up on recent successes, and continue to host events directed toward the ISU community
- Work with ISU community partners to encourage their support and participation in Museum activities.

Benchmarks:

- Increase in the number of ISU visitors and ISU partners working with the museum over the previous year
- Increase in the number of community visitors and communities partners working with the museum over the previous year

Strategic Directive V: Ensure acquisition, retention, and professional development of necessary staff / human resources

Goal 1: Increase opportunities for professional development

Objectives:

- Assess professional development needs
- Identify professional development opportunities
- Develop and implement a plan to provide increased professional development
- Regularly assess and revise plan for increased professional development

Measures:

- Assess all staff's professional development needs and identify professional development opportunities
- Create and implement a plan for increased professional development
- Reassess professional development needs on an annual basis

Benchmarks:

- 100% of staff are able to pursue at least one professional development opportunity each year

Goal 2: Increase number of human resources (work study, undergraduate and graduate students, volunteers and/or paid staff)

Objectives:

- Identify our current human resource base and sources
- Identify specific projects that require additional assistance and explore avenues for filling those needs
- Monitor and enhance volunteer services program

Measures:

- Annually project human resource needs and submit requests through the budget process
- Explore additional avenues for filling additional assistance needs such as work study, student interns, etc
- Continue to recruit volunteers

Benchmarks:

- AAM's Characteristics of an Accreditable Museum require that the composition, qualifications, and diversity of the Museum's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the Museum's mission and goals
- Increase in the number of volunteer service hours
- Number of human resources increased over the previous year

External Factors Influencing this Goal

- Many IMNH strategic goals and objectives assume ongoing and substantive levels of State line-item legislative appropriations. Availability of state revenues, upon which appropriations depend, has been woefully inadequate to meet human resource needs

Goal 3: *Review job descriptions and performance plans for all Museum functions*

Objectives:

- Assess Strategic Plan and job descriptions to determine relevancy of educational advancement, degree attainment, and skill development of staff and faculty
- Create new job descriptions/performance plans to account for relevant changes

Measures:

- Revise and update all staff and faculty job descriptions and performance plans and have them approved by appropriate administrative units and agencies.

Benchmarks:

- In accordance with the AAM's Characteristics of an Accreditable Museum, 100% of staff will have an accurate and completed job description and performance plan in place

Strategic Directive VI: Create and implement a shared Museum vision

Goal 1: Create and implement a shared Museum vision

"We've planned the work . . . Now, we work the plan together"

Objectives:

- Strengthen team work
- Perform long-range planning and assess sustainability
- Identify and prioritize long-term goals (5 to 10 year)

Measures:

- Hold regular team-building activities
- Assess and prioritize current IMNH activities and resources with regard to planning and sustainability; revisit Strategic Plan semiannually and revise if necessary
- Annual meetings held to identify and prioritize long-term (5-10 years out) goals; goals folded into Strategic Plan as indicated

Benchmarks:

- 100% of staff and faculty are offered the opportunity to participate in long-term planning and the prioritization of goals along with training, development, and team-building activities

Goal 2: *Increase Opportunities for Institutional Development*

Objectives:

- Assess institutional development needs
- Identify institutional development opportunities
- Develop, implement, and assess plan to provide for increased institutional development

Measures:

- Compile a list of institutional development needs and available opportunities
- Create a plan for increased institutional development
- Plan to increase institutional development opportunities implemented
- Revised plan to increase institution development opportunities implemented

Benchmarks:

- The Museum's governing authorities and staff will think and act strategically to acquire, develop, and allocate resources to advance the mission of the Museum

External Factors Influencing this Goal

- For the Museum to operate in a fiscally responsible manner requires ongoing legislative and ISU support. The nature of the funding environment, historically, has not allowed this to occur. For example, over the past 15 years over 50% of the Museum's funded staff positions were eliminated. Additionally, the past external organizational structure has impeded the Museum's ability to seek outside funding. Today, however, to assist in effectively advancing the Museum's mission, there is a clear and formal indication that Idaho State University, through its new president and leadership team, will support and help advance IMNH and its mission and vision